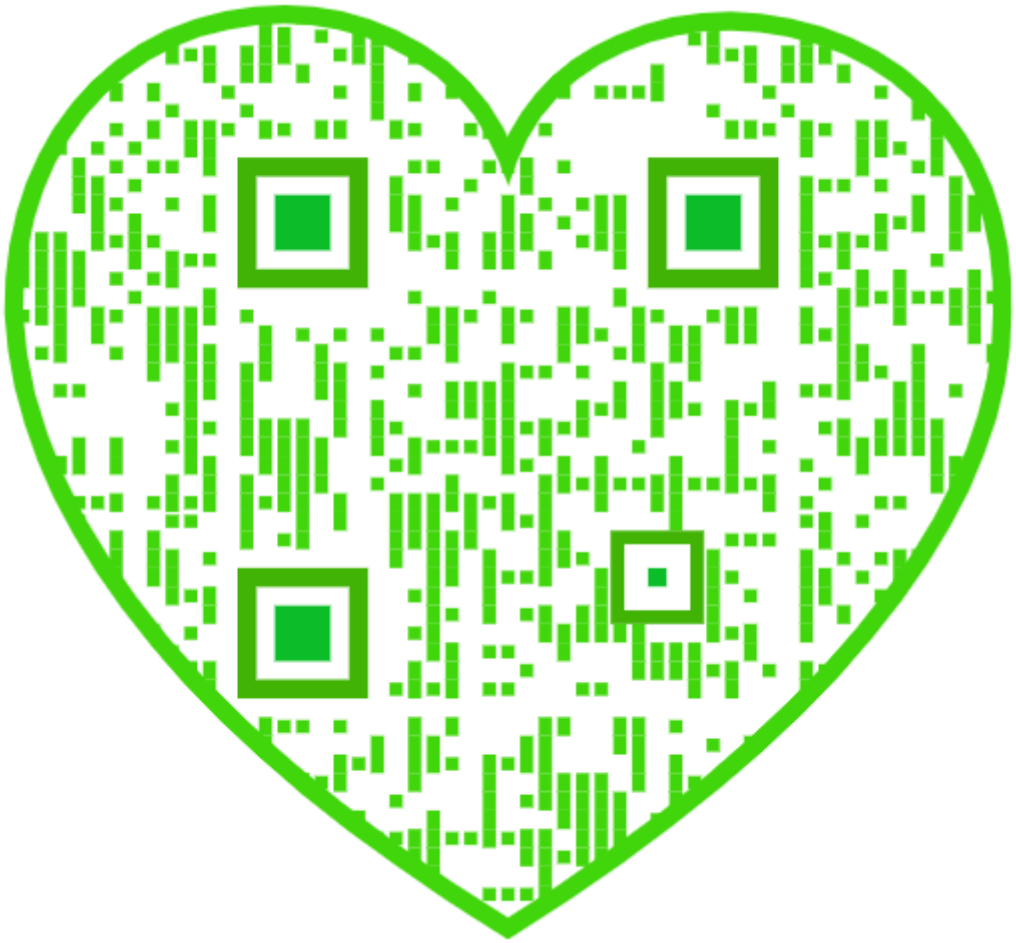

LACE-MAKING
IN THE MIDLANDS

AT WORK

OLD FASHIONED PILLOW AND STAND

LACE-MAKING
IN THE MIDLANDS
PAST AND PRESENT

BY

C. C. CHANNER

AND

M. E. ROBERTS

METHUEN & CO.
36 ESSEX STREET, W.C.
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DEDICATED BY PERMISSION

TO

HER ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCESS LOUISE

THE DUCHESS OF ARGYLL

(PRESIDENT OF THE LADIES' WORK SOCIETY)

228423

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LACE-MAKING
IN THE MIDLANDS

I

SKETCH OF THE PROGRESS OF LACE-MAKING IN EUROPE

THE history of lace-making is the history of an art. A piece of lace is an artistic composition expressed in twisted thread, just as a piece of wood-carving is the expression of the artist's idea in chiselled wood. Lace is not, like embroidery, an ornamented fabric; it is itself ornament. It is not the application of art to a craft; the whole pattern is the fabric, and the fabric is the pattern. It is this peculiarity that distinguishes lace from needlework and from woven-work.

The art is a comparatively modern one. No trace of it can be found on ancient monuments or in early records; the term "old lace" is

a relative term, for before the sixteenth century nothing that we should call "lace" existed.

It was about the close of the seventeenth century that lace reached perhaps its highest point as a vehicle for the expression of artistic ideas. About the middle of the sixteenth century pattern-books began to be published, and it was the effort to carry out the ideas of the designers of patterns which perfected the craft of lace-making. In form, in line, in composition, the patterns belonging to the best periods of lace-making are among the most perfect works that artistic design can show.

Without good design lace becomes worthless rubbish, like a picture without drawing.

In seeking to discover the origin of the art we find two distinct but equally important sources. The first is the ornamentation of linen by means of drawn-thread work and cut-work; the second is the twisting of threads into narrow ornamental braids, known as lace or "purling."

Drawn-thread work, at least in its simpler forms, is familiar to most people. When very fine and elaborate it has much the same effect as a closely-worked piece of lace. Cut-work, or Greek lace as it is sometimes called, is less familiar. It is formed by cutting out in linen patterns, usually geometrical, and then closely button-holing over the threads which remain.

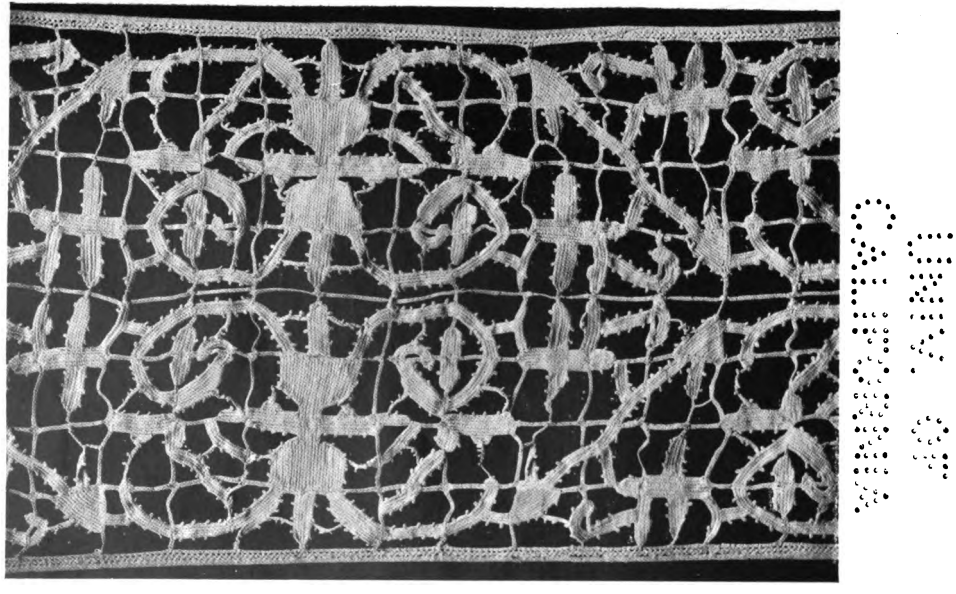

FIG. 1

CUT WORK OR GREEK LACE, 16TH CENTURY

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Take away the linen foundation from the drawn-thread work and from the cut-work and you have a true needlepoint lace.

The second source of which I spoke is purling. Purling was a method of plaiting threads into a little looped edging, and the little loops so often to be found at the edge of lace are still called "purls." Purling is mentioned in the *Canterbury Tales*, and it was much used in the fifteenth century as an ornamental edging.

Other edgings called lace were also made. We should now call them fancy braid, but we still use the old word when we speak of "gold lace."

"Purling" and "lace" are pillow lace in embryo; but pillows, bobbins, and pins were not yet invented. These old lace-makers placed their balls of thread in a man's hand, using his fingers as pegs to assist in the plaiting and twisting. By employing two men fifteen or twenty threads could be used at once. What a laborious method of obtaining so small a result, we think, as we lightly hang our hundred or more bobbins on to the modern pin!

The early pin was large, and was made of boxwood or bone, not well adapted for lace-making. Their manufacture rapidly improved, and though they remained expensive articles

of luxury they were, to a certain extent, in common use about the latter part of the sixteenth century. It was about this period that pillow lace-making commenced.

With the use of pin and pillow the early edgings became elaborated into something more like modern lace edgings, and they were probably made in England, as well as in Italy, Flanders, and other countries. A modern torchon edging is not unlike the Italian edging of the sixteenth century, as the use for such simple ornament has not passed away.

Before proceeding to describe the further progress of lace-making we must draw particular attention to this method of twisting threads into a pattern to form an *edging*, as we shall frequently need to refer to it again.

We notice that it is an outcome of the fancy braid, and that there is no distinction between pattern and ground. The pattern can easily be pricked out on lines at an angle of 45° drawn on the parchment.

The threads are kept in place by means of pins, and are continuous; that is to say, each thread can be traced zigzagging through the whole length of the lace and lace-work, across the width of the edging from side to side, just as one would plait a dozen strands of straw. I shall in future term this method "working

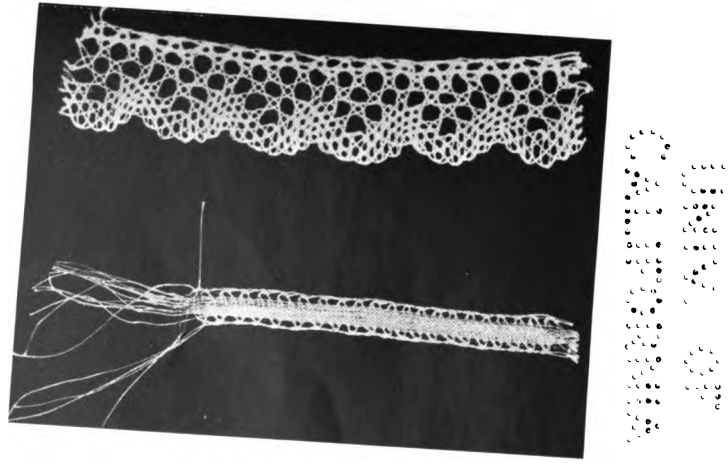

FIG. 2

TORCHON EDGING BRAID

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across the pattern," in order to distinguish it from the method of following the separate lines of the pattern which we shall find in some of the elaborate pillow laces.

In describing the edgings we have wandered far from the ornamental linen-work which we mentioned as one of the sources of the art of lace-making.

Though this book deals with pillow lace, and the linen-work of Italy was more immediately the parent of needlepoint lace, it is none the less important to us. Needlepoint and pillow lace were developed side by side, first in Italy and Flanders, and afterwards in France. The same lace-making districts often produced both needlepoint and pillow work; the same patterns often serve for either. Many pillow stitches are imitations of needle stitches; without the influence of needlepoint it seems likely that purling and lace-making would never have progressed beyond the making of narrow fancy edgings.

It will be interesting to trace the evolution of the various kinds of pillow lace, the interdependent development of pattern, stitch, and method. This evolution we will regard as *being entirely independent of* the art of making the simple edgings already explained.

In the oldest Italian or Flemish lace of any

importance we find that the foundation of the fabric is a braid or tape. This braid, made with bobbins and pins on a pillow, takes the place of the button-holing which forms the solid part of needlepoint lace; it follows the curves and lines of the pattern, and the various turns and curves are connected by means of "sewings."

The sewing, as now practised by Honiton and Brussels lace-workers, is formed by catching a thread through a pinhole in an adjacent piece of braid and passing another thread through the loop thus formed. In this way a pattern worked in separate narrow lines is all joined into a homogeneous whole. Sometimes, instead of the braids being closely united, two threads are twisted, or four threads are plaited, into a little *bar* or "bride," fastened with a sewing into a part of the pattern at some distance and then carried back into the braid. These brides or connecting bars are a marked feature of some needlepoint lace, though of course here they are made in quite a different manner.

The manner in which the braid is carried round the curves is extremely ingenious, and very superior to the later methods of Honiton and Brussels workers. By working partly across the braid and then returning to the outer edge of the curve a kind of wedge can be formed, which brings the work round flat

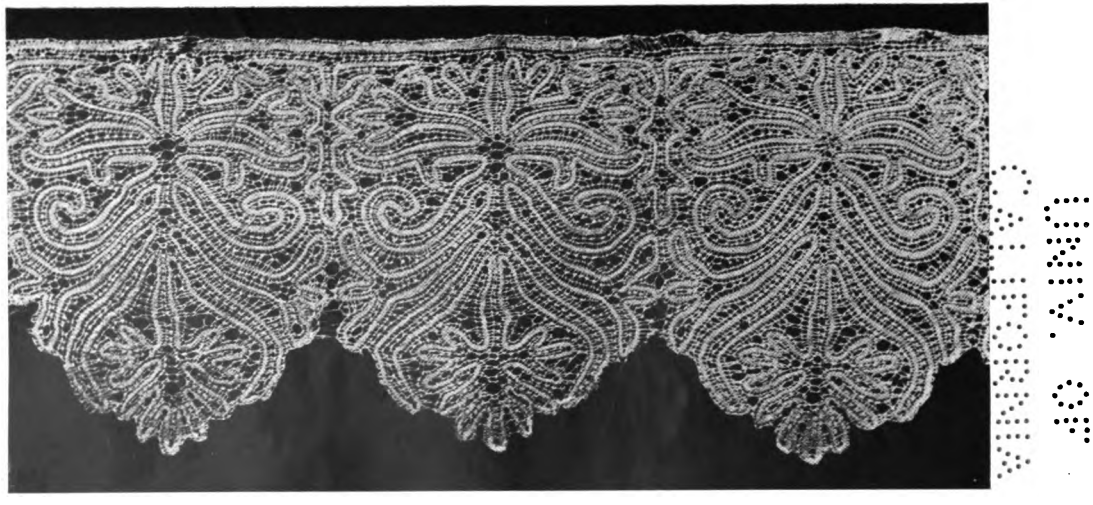

FIG. 3

ITALIAN LACE WITH CONTINUOUS BRAID CLOSELY CONNECTED WITH SEWINGS

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FIG. 4

ITALIAN PILLOW LACE, 17TH CENTURY

without any apparent thickening of the material. There are many old patterns, like the illustrations, in which the lines of the pattern are continuous, but this is not necessary. By ending a braid and beginning another in a different part of the parchment, by cutting off bobbins or adding them, in order to alter the width of the lines, any pattern published by the designers could be followed. Many fancy stitches, some taken from the edging laces, were used to vary the monotony of the plain braid, and purls like the purling of the fourteenth century could be worked along its edge.

While needlepoint lace was first confined to geometrical patterns, the braid lent itself to curves, and pillow lace may have for a time led the way in the improvement of patterns. In the seventeenth century patterns for both kinds of lace developed rapidly; from curves and scrolls we go on to stems, leaves, and flowers, and even animals and men appear—beautiful little drawings worked out in lace.

Needlepoint lace, instead of consisting only of solid work and brides, begins to show "fillings-in" or "modes"—delicate open-work stitches which form the centres of flowers, etc.

Pillow lace was not left behind. It was a simple matter to curve a braid into the form of a flower; then, by means of sewings, threads

could be attached to the edge of the braid and the flower centre filled with open-work stitches to rival the modes of the needlepoint.

Perhaps it will be as well to remark, in passing, that about this time needlepoint workers sometimes used a plain pillow braid, and, sewing it on to their patterns, joined and ornamented it with their stitches, thus saving themselves the labour of working the solid part of their pattern.

This kind of work was revived in this century, and was known among lady fancy-workers as "point lace." The work was often beautifully done, and the patterns good, but it is always inferior in effect to genuine needlepoint lace or to pillow lace of the same style. The pleats and gatherings in the braid are a great blemish.

In the middle of the seventeenth century lace with a net ground appears. Hitherto, though patterns had become elaborate, and fillings were common, and the variety of stitch in pillow lace was marvellous, the *net* ground was unknown. We must also remind ourselves that there was no "working across the pattern" in real "point," or lace as we should now call it. Every line of the pattern was followed separately, the various parts of the work being connected by sewings.

Flemish lace began to be extremely fine, and

with the fine thread the necessity for the careful turning of the curves ceased, and the method was gradually forgotten. Though we see less of the absolutely continuous line, patterns remained of a continuous scrolling nature; it was the introduction of net which helped to cut patterns up till lace ceased to be a pattern and became an arrangement of separate sprigs on a net ground.

The use of braid had at first suggested continuous lines, but it was soon found possible to work a single leaf by the same method, attach it to a stem, cut off the bobbins, and begin again elsewhere with another leaf or flower.

With the introduction of lace-making into other European countries came further developments. It seems that when the art is introduced into a new home it never remains the same, but always becomes in some way characteristic of its new sphere; so that we find Italian lace, Belgian lace, French lace, English lace, all perfectly distinct from one another. Fine Flemish lace introduced into Devonshire becomes the characteristic Honiton lace, and the lace of Lille and Valenciennes, imitated in the Midlands, becomes the Buckinghamshire point.

A symmetrical arrangement of brides and the open-work fillings no doubt led to the

invention of net, which appears both in needle-point and pillow lace.

The illustration shows the earliest form of pillow net. The pattern is worked first, then threads are attached to the edge of the braid and the ground is covered with net. This stitch is an extremely intricate one when compared to the modern Buckinghamshire "point ground," but it is not to be wondered at when it is understood that this net can be worked without the help of a single pin or so much as a line drawn on the parchment. The Midland lace-maker of to-day, unaccustomed to any but her own methods, is astonished and sceptical on hearing of net without pins; but in the early seventeenth century pins were not cheap, and the idea of keeping a twisted net in place by means of a forest of pins was undreamed of. Instead of twists, every side of this mesh is composed of four plaited threads; one couple is carried through from mesh to mesh to keep all firm and in place. Much must depend in such work on skill of hand and eye, and it is a slow, laborious stitch, but there is a fascination in the shaping of those hexagons which is wanting to the mechanical twisting of thread and sticking of endless pins.

As the seventeenth century proceeds, net grounds become commoner, and endless varieties

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FIG. 5

CONTINUOUS BRAID PATTERN WITH FILLINGS AND PLAITED NET

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appear, but the mesh is always plaited, not twisted.

By the time we reach the beginning of the eighteenth century we can associate a particular mesh with a particular lace-making district; the net is simpler, and begins to require immense numbers of pins.

Lace is now finer, and is worked in narrower widths than was the old Italian and Flemish lace. The patterns become much more detached. The lace of Mechlin and of Brussels, the ground of which is very similar, continues to be worked in pieces, the pattern first and the ground afterwards, but a very remarkable change is seen in the Valenciennes lace and in various French laces. This change is shown in a piece of lace in the South Kensington Museum marked as Dutch. It closely resembles Flemish lace with a net ground, but the ground is worked at the same time as the pattern; that is to say, threads are brought out of the pattern to form the net and carried back again into the pattern, so that the threads do not follow the lines of the pattern, but come in and out of it as convenient. In fact, the lace is worked like an edging on a large scale. Such a method requires an enormous number of pins, because every thread must be kept in place till the whole width of the pattern is worked. In

the older method the twisted edge of the finished pattern was like the selvedge of a piece of woven material, and pins could quickly be moved forward to the point where the work was proceeding. By the old method it was almost as easy to work a piece of lace half a yard wide as a piece three inches wide. It was only a matter of time; the line was followed curve by curve and would never be of great width or need a very large number of bobbins.

It is easy to see how Flemish patterns led to the new plan. They are characterised by a peculiar flatness and closeness; lines are often marked in the plain work by means of little rows of twists in the working threads. It was seen that if an outline could be marked by twisted threads the same principle might be applied to the whole pattern; it might all be worked in one, the twisting of the threads outlining the design. There are some pieces of lace in the South Kensington Museum, labelled "Fausse Valenciennes," which show the progress of this method. They have the flat look of Valenciennes lace; there is very little distinction between pattern and ground—in fact, there is no true ground, the small space between the different parts of the pattern being covered with a filling-in. Valenciennes lace has to this day retained a simulation of the twisted

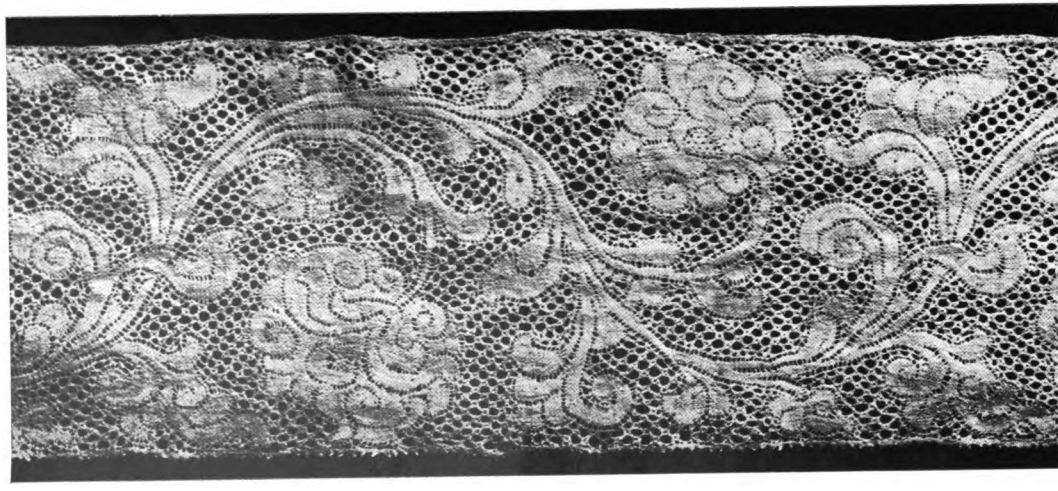

FIG. 6

DUTCH LACE

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selvedge edge of the braid, each part of the pattern being surrounded by *simulated* pin-holes. In the lace of Lille we find the attempt to *imitate* the braid edge frankly abandoned; the pattern is kept distinct from the ground by running a thick white thread called a "gimp" round it. This gimp, which appears in Buckinghamshire lace, must not be confounded with the raised "cordonnet" which sometimes outlines the pattern in Brussels lace. The cordonnet, or "raised work," of Honiton lace is merely used to give boldness and relief, whereas the gimp is an essential part of a point-ground pattern "worked all across" the parchment.

During the eighteenth century fine pillow laces with net grounds reached their highest point of excellence, and began to be imitated by various kinds of embroidery on machine-made net known as "tambour work" and "Limerick lace."

During the nineteenth century the finest and best laces have made but little progress, but there has been a remarkable development of the torchon edgings. In almost every European country a great deal of heavy linen lace is made for the ornamentation of household linen. These laces are usually of geometrical design and are improvements on the old lace edgings, much having been learnt both in the way

of workmanship and design from the true pillow points.

In the nineteenth century, then, we find a curious assimilation of the lace edging with the "point" or "passement," and we apply the same word "lace" to all ornamental fabrics of twisted and plaited thread. Let us briefly recapitulate the various steps by which this has been brought about.

Under the influence of needlepoint the ornamental braid was curved and shaped into a pattern, the various lines of the pattern being connected by sewings. The pattern became more shaped and elaborated, the brides became more ornamental and a more important part of the lace, ornamental fillings were introduced, and the work became, not a curved braid, but an arrangement of flowers and leaves —at first conventional, afterwards naturalistic. Then the net ground becomes general, and early in the eighteenth century some laces began to be worked all in one—pattern and ground as one fabric, without joins. It was now worked like a wide edging, a great many pins and a great many bobbins being employed. The only difference remaining was that the edging usually retained the geometrical pattern with the homogeneousness of pattern and ground; it still showed its character as an ornamental

braid of interlaced threads. Even when a real point ground is so narrow as to be *used* as an edging its character is still obvious, and it cannot be confounded with a torchon edge.

In this short history of lace-making the aim has been not to give a history of the various lace centres, with a classification of lace by its place-name, but to show how the fabric itself grew into being and changed in nature, whether in Italy, France, or England. It is desired to show how a classification might be made, according to pattern and method of working, which would be of great use and interest to the lace-maker. Unfortunately there is a great lack of suitable technical terms for such a purpose.

The old place-names, such as Valenciennes, Brussels, or Lille, are of great value and interest, because they *do* indicate a special method and style; but for the earliest lace, which was much the same in Italy or Flanders, and probably in some other countries, and for modern lace, the system of place-names is most confusing and tiresome. Improved torchon lace is now made in Italy, Germany, Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, and England—in fact, almost all over Europe; patterns are carried from place to place, and there is little difference in the workmanship. Any lace may be made in any district—in point of fact, lace very like Brussels is made in Italy.

Something has been done of recent years to revive the manufacture of the finer and more important pillow laces. There is now a certain demand for copies of beautiful old lace, but it has not become a living, thriving industry. There can be no great sale for lace as a work of art as long as it is only an imitation.

The lace makers and designers of old were real artists, and their patrons were willing to spend great sums of money on lace. The small sums of money paid for the very best lace now make it useless for the artist to give his attention to the design, or for the lace-maker to put her best and most careful work into the execution of that wonderful web of plaited thread which some of us still love, and which unfailingly brings to its workers many happy and peaceful hours of never-wearying occupation.

II

THE PROGRESS OF LACE-MAKING IN ENGLAND, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE MIDLAND COUNTIES

IN the preceding chapter we have roughly traced the evolution of lace-making in Europe; we must now seek to discover, in equally rough outline, the place which England holds among the lace-making nations. This place is by no means so unimportant as is sometimes represented, though the English love of French fashions has to a certain extent militated against the popularity of the purely English. Whatever difficulties in the way of good organisation of the industry we may have had to contend with, want of artistic feeling and originality cannot fairly be laid to the charge of the English lace-makers. Though often adopting French ideas from the foreign lace imported, in order to follow the foreign fashions, they have never been mere copiers. English designers, or drawers as they were called, have produced some most graceful and beautiful

designs, and English workers have shown great dexterity in the adaptation of stitch and method to design. The result of an attempt to copy a foreign lace has usually been the production of a new and individual style by a natural process of development and artistic invention. This rule has been noticeable in Maltese lace, which in workmanship, texture, and design became, in English hands, a very different product from the original simple and rather coarse lace of Malta.

If artistic feeling, as is sometimes said, is shown in the workman's ornamentation of his tools, England stands pre-eminent. An intense pride in the ornamentation and arrangement of her pillow has always been a remarkable characteristic of the Midland lace-maker. More than 400 different patterns of decorated bobbins have been collected, and doubtless many more could be found.

In considering England's place as a lace-making nation we must remember that in other countries a great deal of the best lace was made in convents, and that in England it was impossible to fill the place of the cultured ladies to be found within the convent walls. The convent was like a joint-stock company; it had capital both in money and in ability; it was also a most convenient centre for the teaching

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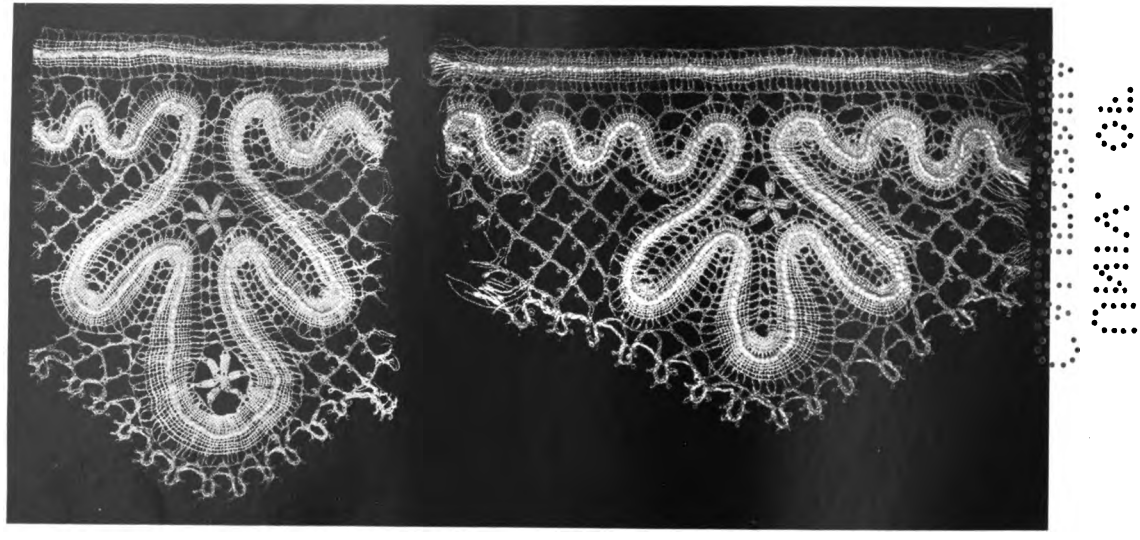

FIG. 7

CATHERINE OF ARAGON LACE

of art and craftsmanship; and it had a commanding position as a commercial house. It was manufacturer, merchant, capitalist, and instructor all at the same time. The decline of convents in England left the lace industry with but little capital and organisation; and both teaching and design generally remained in the hands of a few families who understood it and in which it was handed down from generation to generation.

Needlepoint, which requires more delicate skill of hand and eye than does pillow lace, died out entirely as an article of English manufacture, though we know that it was made in England in the sixteenth century; the making of it was doubtless taught in the convents. There is a tradition in the Midlands that Queen Catherine of Aragon worked hard to encourage it in the villages, and that she introduced new patterns. It is possible that she tried to teach pillow lace also, for there is a pattern made in Northamptonshire, very like what we should call an old Italian pattern (merely meaning that it is an early form of pillow lace), which is called Queen Catherine's pattern. There is no other Midland lace like it. It is said that she bade her ladies burn their lace that they might buy of the poor English workers. Probably want of encouragement and good technical instruction

caused the industry to die out after her death. England was soon plunged into the Puritan abyss which almost killed art. We spoke in our previous chapter of the purling mentioned by Chaucer, and of the lace edgings which suggested the use of pillow and bobbins for the true "point." These edgings were extensively made in England, and were known as "bone lace." The word "lace" would not have been applied to the wide points which were the rivals of needlepoint.

In *Twelfth Night* Shakespeare shows his familiarity with the sight of lace-makers—

> "*Duke.* O fellow, come, the song we had last night:
> Mark it, Cesario, it is old and plain:
> The spinsters and the knitters in the sun,
> And the free maids that weave their thread with bones,
> Do use to chaunt it."

About 1662 Flemish workers were brought to England to teach their superior kind of lace. The industry took root in Devonshire and became the famous Honiton lace. This must have seemed to the bone-lace makers a very new and different kind of work from the weaving of their edgings. Honiton lace soon developed a style of its own, but though much beautiful Honiton work has been done the design is often poor. It is curious that Midland lace has never suffered from this poverty of

design; it was not so far from the great trade routes, it is more adaptable to any form of pattern, and it requires greater technical skill to make a point-ground (Buckinghamshire) parchment. Any good design, either conventional or naturalistic, can be worked in point-ground lace, but some styles are impossible in Honiton lace. On the other hand, within certain limits, Honiton lace is a better means of expression, and it is much easier to make the parchments. This last fact tempts persons with little powers of draughtmanship to make their own parchments, whereas the point-ground design must be left in the hands of the professional.

We have seen that needlepoint spread more quickly in Europe than pillow point. Honiton lace must have been one of the earliest of the transplanted pillow points. Next in point of time must have come French pillow laces, and then Buckinghamshire point. This lace shows French influence; it is worked all in one across the pattern, like a French lace; the selvedge edge to the pattern has been replaced by a gimp; the net is not of an early character, being a twisted net dependent on pins; none of it can be earlier than the eighteenth century. Some of the parchments are very like Valenciennes parchments, though we find no trace of the Valenciennes ground or the simulated

"pin-holes." The introduction of this kind of lace greatly influenced the bone-lace makers, and gave rise, especially in Northamptonshire, to the manufacture of many charming little point-ground edgings, which, while sometimes remaining geometrical in design, resembled in workmanship the wide-point grounds of Bucks.

Maltese lace, introduced in this century, is a development of an edging founded on patterns of interlacing circles instead of the more usual intersecting straight lines.

III

LACE-MAKING IN THE MIDLANDS DURING THE EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURIES

"The pattern grows, the well-depicted flower,
Wrought patiently into the snowy lawn,
Unfolds its bosom: buds and leaves and sprigs,
And curling tendrils gracefully dispos'd,
Follow the nimble fingers of the fair—
A wreath that cannot fade of flowers that blow
With most success when all besides decay."

COWPER.

THE poet Cowper, living at Olney, the centre of one of the best lace-making districts, was familiar with the fine point-grounds of graceful flowery design, and his poetic muse was not neglectful of the lace-makers. The greater part of Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire, part of Bedfordshire, and a little bit of Oxfordshire, form the lace-making district of the Midlands. These counties have always supported textile industries of one form or another, with a leaning towards dainty manufactures such as ribbons, straw-plaiting, or lace-making. Many Northamptonshire villages now given

over to the unsightly shoe trade once lived by the weaving of plush and silk; other villages within living memory were occupied with darning net for window curtains, etc., the work being known as "frame-work."

The very small and dainty hands of many women in the Northamptonshire villages are often remarked upon by strangers; they are certainly an artistic race, showing it especially in their extreme fondness for flowers and appreciation of pretty scenery. From the beginning of the eighteenth century until the middle of the nineteenth, point-ground lace, generally known as Buckinghamshire point, became characteristic of the district. The best lace was made in the southern part of Northamptonshire near Towcester, and in Buckinghamshire in and round Olney. Northampton and the western part of the county were famous for the narrow edgings and cheaper laces. Bedfordshire always appears to take to work of a showy daintiness. It became the home of Maltese lace, and now makes millinery laces of horsehair and tinsel, and twists beaded wire into patterns, and works with paillettes and spangles.

The improvement in lace-making which took place in the eighteenth century was partly due to the refugees who flocked to our shores after

the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. This explains the very close resemblance between French and English pillow laces.

Defoe, writing of Bedfordshire, says: "Through the whole south part of this county, the people are taken up with the manufacture of bone lace, in which they have wonderfully exercised and improved within the last few years." He also mentions Newport Pagnell and other towns in Bucks as being the centres of much trade.

During the reigns of the Georges, notwithstanding much smuggling of foreign goods, the trade steadily increased, and at the marriage of Frederick, Prince of Wales, nearly all the lace worn was of English make.

In 1750 the Society of anti-Gallicans was formed; it held quarterly meetings, and did much to encourage good work. Two years after it began, it awarded the first prize to Mr. William Marriote of Newport Pagnell for bone lace, which, according to the judges, was the best ever made in England. In 1761 the lace-makers of Bucks presented the King with a fine pair of lace ruffles. In 1763 good King George, always anxious for the welfare of his people, ordered that all stuffs and laces to be worn at his sister's wedding should be made in this country; but the nobility preferred to disobey him, and ordered, as was their habit, a

quantity of foreign material. What must have been their disgust and alarm on hearing that three days before the wedding the King had sent his custom-officers to the Court milliner to carry off the prohibited goods. But a lesson had been learnt, for on His Majesty's birthday the Court appeared in garments of strictly British make.

The fluctuations in the lace industry have always been remarkable, the scale of prices rising and falling in a bewildering and astonishing manner: at one time we hear of lace-makers earning £1 a week, at another time but 3*s.* or 4*s.*

In 1780 the trade seems to have fallen into a bad condition; for Cowper, enclosing a petition to Lord Dartmouth in favour of lace-makers, declares that "Hundreds in this little town (Olney) are upon the point of starving, and the most unremitting industry is barely sufficient to keep them from it."

For many years Cowper's house was used as a lace school under the management of Mrs. Langley, the wife of a former vicar; about forty workers were employed.

In 1785 an essay was published in the *Gentleman's Magazine* dealing with the cause of deformity among the lace-makers of Bucks and Northants, and suggesting certain remedies which have long since been adopted.

List of Contributors

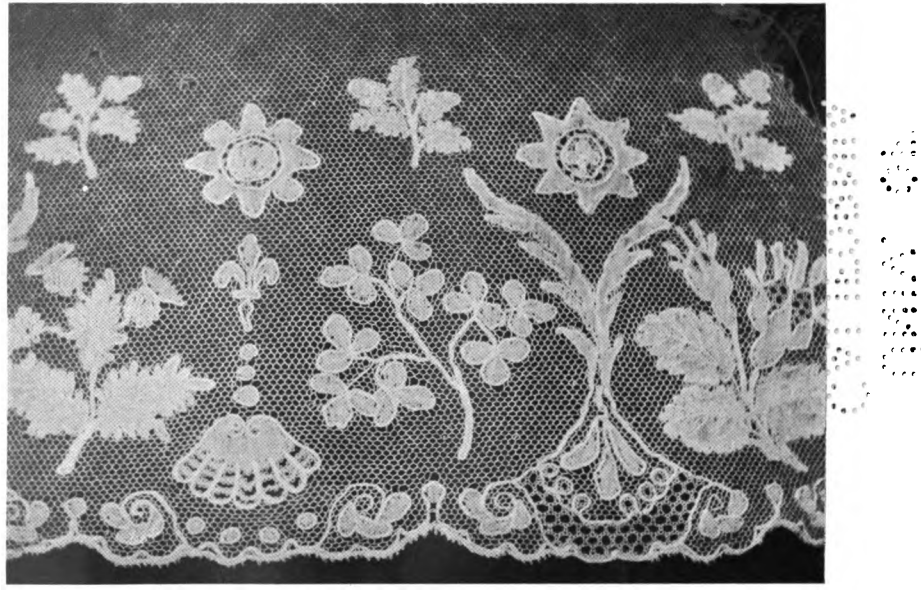

FIG. 8

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE PILLOW LACE

MADE FOR THE PRINCESS ROYAL WHEN AN INFANT

As at the beginning of the eighteenth century our laces owed much to France, so in the nineteenth we received another impetus from refugees who fled from the Revolution. When war was declared and our ports were closed against French goods, energetic buyers undertook to supply the English market with lace like that made in Normandy. The "French ground" was introduced, which resembles what is now known as "Point de Paris."

At Hanslope, in Bucks, 800 out of 1,275 inhabitants made lace, and a net profit of over £800 was yearly brought into the place. Those were grand times for the lace-makers, both men and women, many of them earning as much as £1 1*s.* per week; but this state of things did not last long, for the prices dropped when peace was made.

Queen Victoria is the possessor of some lovely English lace; a small piece, made for the Princess Royal when an infant, remains in the possession of a lace-buyer at Olney, where it was worked; a photograph of it is shown on the opposite page.

The exhibition of 1851 brought about a revival of the lace industry. The wife of the lace-buyer above mentioned worked with one or two others at the exhibition. The pillows were covered for the occasion with blue velvet

edged with rose colour and with rose-coloured bobbin bags. The lace worked by Mrs. Smith from the pattern shown in the illustration took the gold medal prize. The lace was exquisitely fine, twenty slip thread being used, a degree of fineness almost unknown at the present day. It took three months to make one foot of lace. Her Majesty the Queen, after watching Mrs. Smith work, asked, as so many ladies ask lace-makers, why her bobbins were of so many different patterns: "Is it in order to tell which of them should be turned over?" These bobbins used in the presence of the Queen have been carefully treasured, though Mr. Smith has given many away to those who will value them. Some are in the possession of the authors. The few words uttered by Her Majesty have been remembered and repeated with ever-increasing interest through the years that have passed, and the kindly notice given by their sovereign marked the day as a red-letter day to the Olney lace-makers.

A woman now living in Spratton remembers the time when her mother, then living at Creaton, made the lace worn by the Lady Sarah Spencer at the wedding of the Princess of Wales. She was but a child, but remembers distinctly the lady coming on horseback now and again to see how the lace was getting on.

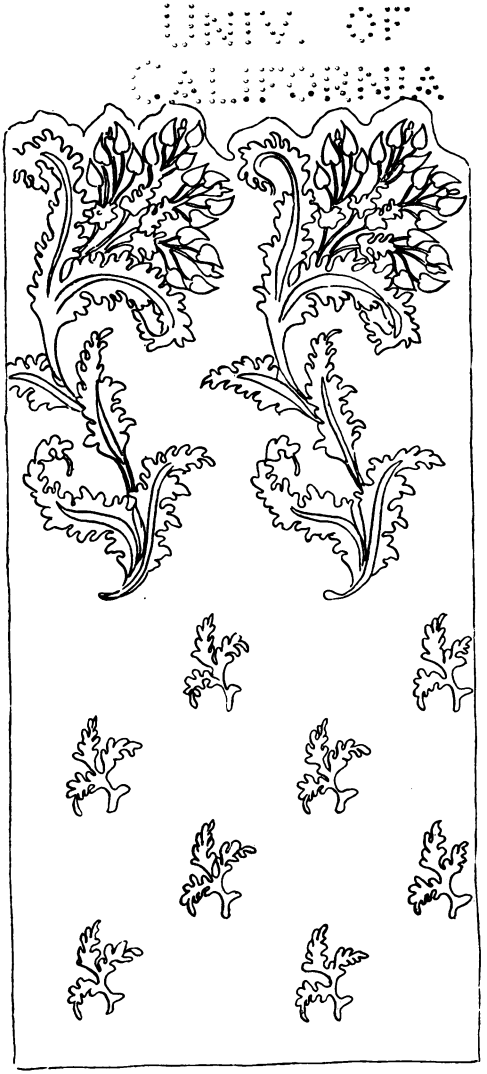

FIG. 9

DESIGN FOR BUCKS PILLOW LACE
WORKED BEFORE THE QUEEN AT THE EXHIBITION OF 1851

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She does not remember the price of it, but says that the money earned by her mother for this special piece of lace bought them a pony and trap, the first they had ever had.

About the close of the fifties Maltese lace was introduced into the Midlands, and in many places its manufacture unfortunately superseded the old points. It is more quickly made and will better bear the introduction of bad work than will the point ground. Perhaps, though much of it can have little claim to beauty, it is not altogether bad that it should have been introduced. It widened the ideas of the lace-makers, suggesting new methods and accustoming them to turn their hands to any kind of lace.

The last great outburst of prosperity was in 1870, owing to the Franco-German War, when lace-makers again earned splendid wages; but since then, until the present revival, with the exception of a short rage for "yak" lace, it had been at a very low ebb. In many villages the industry was almost entirely abandoned, and many workers had yards of beautiful lace of which they were quite unable to dispose.

IV

LACE SCHOOLS

I SHOULD be sorry to outrage the susceptibilities of my readers by suggesting that they could recall the early part of this century, but I am going to ask them if, in imagination *only*, they will be so kind as to go back through six or seven decades and visit with me one or two of the lace schools which were then scattered so thickly throughout the counties of Beds, Bucks, and Northants.

The first one that we enter strikes us as stifling, in spite of the door and the two windows being thrown open, and no wonder, for in that cottage-room are gathered thirty pupils, varying from six to sixteen years of age. The boys are dressed like the village lads of to-day, excepting that instead of knickerbockers they all wear trousers; but the girls have print frocks, low at the neck and sleeves, and very short in the skirt, from which peep white stockings and shoes, varying in neatness according to the disposition and means of the parents. Some of the children

are very small, not more than six years of age.

They are sitting in rows, each little person on his or her four-legged stool, with its pillow resting against the three-legged stand in front of it. Those pillows are dressed in dark blue, and look as if they had tasted of the good things in life, so round are they, and fat, and heavy; indeed, when they carry them, the younger children's arms will hardly meet round them, and their little feet stagger under the weight.

In front of the thirty stools is a desk at which, in her majesty, is enthroned the teacher. But for the addition of spectacles and a kerchief she is dressed like the elder girls; by her side lies her sceptre, that all-powerful sceptre, her cane. Every hour she goes her rounds from pillow to pillow, and woe betide the luckless pupil whose work is badly done!

As the children turn the bobbins over and over, they sing doggerel verses called "tells," sticking pins as fast as their little fingers can plant them; at every tenth pin they call out the number, and so the room is full of counting. Now they have taken sides, and are going to "strive," or race each other, to see which can stick the greater number of pins in a given time. To escape the cane they have to put

in ten pins a minute, or 600 an hour; but as the race grows in excitement many of them get in between 700 to 800, while we grow giddy at the sight, and at the sound of the ceaseless "clack, clack" of the bobbins.

It is nearly dinner-time. All but quite the little ones have been there since six o'clock; they are beginning to grow fidgety—visions of pie, cheese, and cake float over the parchments. At last comes the welcome news that "time's up." Each child covers over its pillow, turns its four-legged stool upside down, places the pillow in it, and runs off laughing and shouting, with the girls' straw or paste-board bonnets and bare necks gleaming in the sunshine.

All but a little girl of seven. She is scrupulously clean, but very small and delicate—a sweet little child, with long, fair hair hanging down her back in two tidy plaits. Her blue eyes, and very blue they are, just now are filled with tears; but the little white face is set in order to keep them from brimming over and spoiling her lace. She is faint and weak from one of those sick headaches to which poor children are so often subject. She has had nothing to eat since early morning, and, like all the others, excepting a few learners, has been working since six o'clock. As it neared the dinner-hour her spirits had revived, for had

she not brought hers with her, and was it not now in the oven? Such a dinner too, gooseberry tart with sugar! Suddenly she had found herself on the floor, knocked down by the rough fist of her teacher. "I'll wake you! If you don't choose to work with the others, you'll have to stop in while they play."

At one o'clock the others troop in again and pack themselves in, row behind row, and work goes on as before, only the room grows hotter, and the "clack, clack" of the bobbins more monotonous. We wonder how the children can keep their attention. For the most part they sit very upright; for has not mother told them again and again that if they stoop over their work they will get hunchbacked?

Now and again a child falls short of pins, and goes "a-begging." Stopping before a likely giver, it sings "Mary Ann" (or whatever the name may be), "a pin for the poor; give me one, and I'll ask you no more." In this way it generally gathers for itself a nice little store.

Tea-time comes. Out run the children for half an hour; but the little figure by the window sits on, for her task is not done.

From five to six is a quiet time; you can hear a pin drop, for the children are working for dear life, many with aching backs and through a mist of tears. They know that if

when "time's up" is called they should be but five pins behind they will be kept in another hour.

It is over, and the room is empty of all save three or four; but among them is the child by the window. She has had twelve hours of it; she is only seven, and suffering from want of food and a sick headache.

With a sigh we turn to watch the others, and hope that they now, after so many hours of hard work, are free to skip and play hop-scotch like their little grandchildren of to-day. But no; for many of them learning is not yet over: they are going to the night-school, where wearily they will pick up enough of reading to make in after life their leisure a blessing to them rather than a curse.

An hour later we pass a little blue-eyed child sobbing piteously. She has just been released from her work, and is holding in her arms her much-longed-for gooseberry tart; but alas! it is burnt to a cinder. She is an old woman now, but the memory of that disappointment is still fresh to her.

It is on a winter's evening that we visit our next school. As we enter we can make out some sixteen girls from the ages of seven to twenty, and we notice that they are all working

by the light of one tallow candle. The little ones went home when it grew dark, and those who are left are mostly good workers.

In the centre of the room stands the four-legged candle-stool as high as an ordinary table. The top, which is called the "hole-board," is pierced by a hole in the centre and four others round it. In the middle hole is fixed a long stick with a socket for the candle at the top and peg-holes through the side, so that it can be raised and lowered at will. In the other four holes there are placed wooden cups, into each of which fits a flask made of very thin glass and filled with water. These flasks act as strong condensers or lenses. The girls sit diagonally, four to each bottle, those in the second and third circle having the better light.

The room, though stuffy, is cold, for, being so full, the fire has to be kept low. We wonder why the girls do not shiver more, for they are clad like their predecessors in print dresses, and from their low sleeves and large white collars gleam their bare necks and arms.

As usual they are singing. This time it is a "tell" that would be useful for all lace-workers to learn: "Do your stitch, stick your pin, and do your stitch about it." Indeed, it is for want of this "stitch about the pin" that so many

workers' lace is faulty. Then they strike up another.

While they are singing, we will ask the teacher to tell us a little about the school, and to show us some of the lace they have made, and which is waiting to be taken to the lace-buyer, who lives in the neighbouring town.

When a little child joins the school she is usually six or seven, but sometimes one is taken who is a year or so younger. If she is sharp, she will be about three weeks learning her first little edging; during that time she pays 1*s.* a week, and afterwards 3*d.* in the summer, and 4*d.* during the winter (this varies a little in different schools, as do the hours of working). For the first six months she generally puts in only nine hours a day, but after that at least ten, with the exception of Saturday, which is a half-holiday. The winter hours are usually from eight to eight, allowing two hours for meals, but many work an hour or so longer. Every Saturday the teacher takes the lace to the buyer, and gives the girls the exact amount that they have earned, deducting only the 3*d.* or 4*d.* a week for the use of the room and lights. If they sell their work to a private customer, they are allowed to charge 1*d.* a yard more.

Then she shows us what they have made. First there is the little edging upon which the

new-comers are started; it is called "the town trot." After that we see an array of the sweetest baby-laces, the narrowest being only 3*d.* a yard. Many of them are made up on the daintiest of baby-caps; for in those days babies began their lives in a staid and respectable manner, even wearing their caps under their hoods when they went out. Round the border of a cap ran one or two rows of narrow lace, plain or closely quilted in tiny box-pleats, while in the centre there is a lace "round" or "horseshoe," often exquisite in design and workmanship. Here is one set off by narrow loops of white satin ribbon. Then there are a set of cambric handkerchiefs and full-grown nightcaps, edged with the "heart" and "oak-leaf" patterns. After we have admired and wondered, she fetches a large wooden box, out of which she brings some truly lovely designs in rich lace handkerchiefs, parasol-covers, veils, etc. She tells us that the girls at her school usually earn, after deducting what they pay her, 2*s.* 3*d.* a week.

But you must not think that the teacher gives us this information all at once, for she constantly leaves us to inspect the workers. Sometimes she remarks to a girl, "I'll wake you! you've been asleep!" and wake her she does by a smart hit of her cane across the bare shoulders.

Just then a knock comes at the door—a father has come for his lass. It is a pity that there are not more like him, for the girls turned out into the darkness will find rough lads waiting round the corners for some of them, and so, hardly through their own fault, many come to sorrow.

It is St. Thomas's Day. The children are assembled; row behind row they are sitting, with their fat pillows resting against the stands before them. But by the look of repressed excitement on every face, there is evidently something about to happen. Presently the teacher leaves the room on the pretence of getting a parchment. In a minute the girl nearest the door has sprung up and bolted it; the pillows are put on one side, and an indescribable hubbub ensues. When the teacher returns she shakes the door violently, demanding to be let in; but the answer comes from thirty voices, "It's St. Thomas's Day; give us a half-holiday, and we'll let you in." For five minutes or so she stands outside grumbling and knocking, and then, finding that the children have turned the stools against her, she (not unwillingly, perhaps) gives in. The holiday is promised, the door is opened, and she walks in as the children rush out. As we watch them laughing and shouting, we think that it is a pity

that custom should have fixed their holiday for one of the dullest and certainly the shortest of the days in the year.

"Are there any other days that you are turned out of your own school?" we ask the teacher.

"No; but they generally manage to work half-time on St. Andrew's Day."

"And what do they do with the other half?"

"Oh, have tea in the schoolroom," she answers grimly. "It is the young folk who are spoilt nowadays."

After that we leave her to her pillow, with the click-clack of her bobbins sounding mournfully through the now deserted room.

V

LACE-MAKERS AT HOME

"Yon cottager, who weaves at her own door,
Pillow and bobbins all her little store;
Content though mean, and cheerful if not gay,
Shuffling her thread about the livelong day—
Just earns a scanty pittance, and at night
Lies down secure, her heart and pocket light."

COWPER.

HAVING visited the lace schools, I will ask my readers if they will bear with me while I tell them a little about the workers of this century in their own homes. A child was often introduced to her pillow at three years old by her mother, and then, when she had learnt how to handle her bobbins, she was sent off to the lace school, where she would stay until she either went into service or was married; or, if she wished to save the expense of the 3*d.* or 4*d.* a week, she would work in her own home. In those days, especially in one part of the Midlands, nearly every cottager, married or single, sat at her pillow; for it was

usually only farmers' or tradesmen's daughters who thought of going to service.

Whatever may be said of the "good old days," the results were most disastrous, not only to their health, but also to their morals; indeed, a lady, who is interested in a certain Midland village, tells me that although it was sad to see an old industry dying out, yet she was only too thankful when bad work and bad prices made it necessary for the girls to desert their pillows and go out into service. In this chapter we will endeavour to show how the present revival of the trade has been obtained without the slightest risk either to health or morals, and also how it is of benefit to many hundreds of families.

At the time of the Queen's accession, as has been said, the trade was very flourishing, and it was found that a man could earn more at lace-making than in the fields, where his wages would be from 7*s.* to 8*s.* a week, while at his pillow he could make 9*s.* or 10*s.* In those days, then, the workers, men and women, would sit side by side in each other's houses, in order to save firing. In the winter they had to sit very near to the windows, which did not give as much light as they do now, and it was often bitterly cold. In some parts, to keep themselves warm, they used a "dicky

pot"; this was made of rough brown ware, glazed, and filled with embers begged from the bread oven of a well-to-do neighbour.

In print we often find mention of deformity and disease among lace-workers. These were greatly due, first, to the overcrowding of the schools, and secondly, to the constrained position necessarily adopted by men, women, and even babies, in order to see their work. No wonder, then, that a certain little boy in Bucks, one day growing disgusted, made away with his pillow down a well!

The patterns were usually designed and pricked either by lace-buyers, superior workers, or those brought up specially to that part of the trade, many of the designs, especially some drawn at Olney, being very lovely. (See Figs. 10 and 11.)

Here I should like to insert an account of the keeping of St. Catherine's Day, which was long held as a holiday both by lace-makers and weavers in parts of the Midlands. Its origin is probably far older than the time of Catherine of Aragon, but very possibly, being her fête-day, it has since been held in special honour by lace-makers, as tradition points to that queen as the introducer of the craft. If so, it was one certainly very different from the present pillow-work, being probably an adaptation of needlepoint.

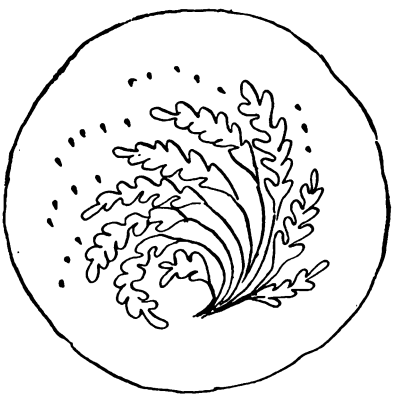


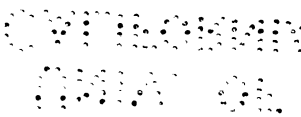
FIG. 10

DESIGN FOR CENTRE OF BADGE CAP

FIG. 11

DESIGN FOR FINE BUCKS LACE MADE AT OLNEY

EARLY 19TH CENTURY



I am indebted for the following account to Mrs. Orlebar, of Hinwick House:—

"*Cattern Tea.*—In Podington and neighbouring villages the lace-makers have, within the memory of middle-aged people, 'kept Cattern' on December 6th—St. Catherine's Day (Old Style). I believe it was Catherine of Aragon who used to drink the waters of a mineral spring in Wellingborough, and who (as is supposed) introduced lace-making into Beds. The poor people know nothing of the Queen, only state that it was an old custom to keep 'Cattern.'

"The way was for the women to club together for a tea, paying *6d.* apiece, which they could well afford when their lace brought them in *5s.* or *6s.* a week.

"The tea-drinking ceremony was called 'washing the candle-block,' but this was merely an expression. It really consisted in getting through a great deal of gossip, tea, and Cattern cakes—seed cakes of large size. Sugar balls went round as a matter of course. After tea they danced, just one old man whistling or fiddling for them, and '*they enjoyed theirselves like queens!*'

"The entertainment ended with the cutting of a large apple pie, which they divided for

supper. Their usual bedtime was about eight o'clock.

"An old rhyme is still extant about Cattern. I cannot recover more than these lines :—

"'Rise, maids, arise !
Bake your Cattern pies !
Bake enough, and bake no waste,
So that the old bell-man may have a taste !'"

VI

THE DECLINE OF THE LACE INDUSTRY

DURING the childhood of the now middle-aged in our villages the lace industry was flourishing and well paid; ten years ago the trade was almost extinct; but one generation separates us from the time when almost every child in the village was "brought up to the pillow."

What was the cause of this sudden decline, of this astounding change in village life? Ask an old lace-maker, and the reply will be, "Machine-made lace"; inquire a little further into the subject, and the inadequacy of the answer will strike you forcibly. The question is really a most complex one; it cannot be answered without some consideration of the great social changes which were taking place all over England in the earlier part of our Queen's reign. In this short book one cannot pretend to answer it thoroughly and satisfactorily.

Let us first try to understand in what way machine-made lace did really affect the industry. It must be borne in mind that the

disappearance of English pillow-made lace from the market did not coincide in time with the production of good machine work, and also that we never ceased to import pillow lace from abroad, and further that the present revival of the pillow lace industry comes at a time when imitation lace of good quality can be had at very low prices.

Until the present century lace was essentially an adjunct of the rich. It was costly, of fine and intricate workmanship, and was prized accordingly. The wealthy and the noble possessed it, the middle class had a little, the poor did not aspire to lace at all. With the introduction of machine lace the fabric became common; the imitation was eagerly bought by those to whom the real thing had been an unhoped-for luxury, and to them it seemed almost as good and as beautiful. Many could not even distinguish between the hand work and the machine work.

A rage for cheap lace set in, and with it came the introduction of Maltese, which was showy and cheap compared to the point grounds. Pillow lace tried to compete with machine lace on its own ground, that of cheapness and showy effectiveness. Until the public tired of Maltese and coarse edgings the lace-makers did not suffer—then the crash came. Machine lace

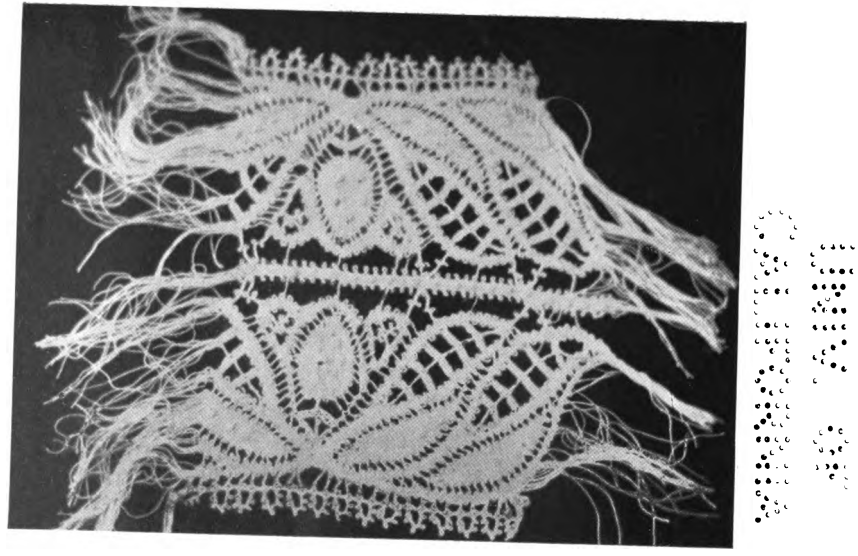


FIG. 12

MALTESE LACE

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improved, imitations of the beautiful old laces were produced; the public had not yet learnt to distinguish the true from the false, and the pillow lace-makers had all but forgotten how to make good lace. In the race for cheapness they had begun to use cheap cotton threads, and to work in a slipshod manner. Prices fell to a deplorable level, and lace-making came to be hated as the most fearful drudgery. Only a return to the good old lace and the good old methods could save the industry; it was found impossible to turn out bad lace as cheaply and as rapidly as the machine.

Some proof of the truth of these facts may be gathered by noting the extraordinary difference of opinion which exists among former lace-makers as to the merits of the trade. An old woman of seventy or eighty, whose memory goes back to the flourishing day of the beautiful point-ground lace, or half-stitch as it is sometimes called, will say, "Ah, I always loved my pillow. I shall always love it; I will work at it as long as I can sit to it and see." "Give me a pair of spectacles as I can see with," says another, "and let me have my pillow; it's nice work." "It's nice clean work," echoes another old body; "why don't the young folk take to their pillows now? we loved our pillows." In another cottage we hear, "When I was a girl I spent all

my pocket-money on my pillow; I loved to have it nice. I had some beautiful bobbins, bone ones with beads on them and names, and my pins had different-coloured heads. How we loved our pillows, and what we would spend on them!" Now talk to a buxom widow of middle age: "I *hate* it; I burnt all my bobbins; it's a bad trade." "If you go lace-making," says another, "you'll never have salt to your porridge." "It's an awful trade, lace-making," we hear from another; "you'll never make your fortune at it. I always said none of my children should be lace-makers." The explanation of the contrast is to be found in the fact that the middle-aged remember the bad times, the cheap lace and poor patterns, the fearful hurrying and ceaseless work. The older women think of the time when the work was beautiful and good and a joy to do.

We cannot leave the subject of machine-made lace without remarking the injurious effect it has upon the public taste. When it aims at imitating the work of the pillow, the spurious showiness and perfection of it — the likeness and yet unlikeness—palls when one becomes accustomed to it, and may create a distaste for the real thing, which, in contrast to the imitation, never by itself tires the eye. This difficulty is met by the manufacturers by a con-

stant change of fashion and style, the tawdriness of the new fashion passing unnoticed. Machine lace is at its best when it does not directly imitate any pillow lace, when it takes an independent place of its own, with suitable designs made expressly for it. The distinction between the real and the imitation is now much more clearly understood than it was twenty years ago; the true place and use of each is recognised, and, though real lace cannot regain the unique position which it once held, it cannot now be said to suffer from competition with the machine.

The social change in village life had probably a far greater effect on the industry than had the imitation lace. The small, self-supporting community had become little more than a colony of agricultural labourers. The Parish Councils failed to restore the village life because the old free population had departed into the towns, the little village trades were lost or merged in the great town manufactures. The change came gradually, and as it came it threw more and more power into the hands of the landowner and tenant farmer, and it was to their interest to discourage the village industry and make the population entirely dependent upon the land. We have many proofs of what was done to bring contempt upon the

lace industry. Instead of any effort being made to prevent evil in connection with the lace schools the whole system was most unjustly condemned. Farmers' wives still speak contemptuously of lace-making, and twelve or fourteen years ago few of the landowners knew or cared anything about the trade. People talk of having sometimes bought a bit of lace from some poor starving old woman, as if they had performed a great act of charity, instead of having got a fine piece of work for less than half its value.

We asked a middle-aged woman for reminiscences of the lace school.

"I never went much to a lace school, though of course I made lace. Our clergyman's wife persuaded me to leave the lace school and come to a school she had, to learn needlework."

No doubt there was much of this persuading and much demonstration of the superiority of needlework to lace, and the greater respectability of the lady's school.

No one can do too much in the cause of true education, but it was characteristic of the times that the way to improve the girls should have been the destruction of a beautiful craft. The reform of the lace school was perhaps as necessary as the reform of the factory. We know more now of the merits of fresh air and space;

but the teachers were not always tyrants, and the best of our village population—the most refined and clever and enterprising—spent their childhood at their pillows.

The rôle of the former lace-makers numbers National School teachers, shopkeepers, and the wives of the higher rank of village artisans. It can hardly be argued that the trade was the enemy of education.

The Education Act dealt the final blow at the lace industry. The school at Paulers Pury, in Northants, was continued until after the children were obliged to attend the National School; but it had to be abandoned, as the teacher (who still makes lace) found that her pupils were not able to do any good work after the day's lessons were over. They were thus left without technical training, everything being given up for the sake of learning reading, writing, and arithmetic.

At Paulers Pury the best point-ground work had always been made—work which no machine could rival, and which was always valuable; and the direct effect of the Education Act and of the changing social conditions is most clearly seen.

The loss of the lace schools left the industry without organisation and without capital and without a fresh supply of trained workers.

After a bad period of idling at home, the girls began to go out to service and to take the place of the tradesmen's and farmers' daughters, who were beginning to think domestic service beneath them. To go out was now considered a rise in the social scale, and so the contempt in which lace-making was held increased.

In the next chapter we shall endeavour to follow the turn of the tide which has resulted in the revival of the old trade.

VII

REVIVAL OF THE LACE INDUSTRY

IT has been felt for some time past that something must be done to prevent the utter stagnation of village life, and that to provide a good school with nothing beyond but the work on the land was to sow the seeds of discontent and the mischief that comes of dulness. We have been encouraging village entertainments and holidays, village music, and, above all, village industries. The Home Arts and Industries Association for Northamptonshire, under Miss Dryden's energetic influence, has done wonders for the lace as well as for other beautiful crafts. Other county exhibitions have encouraged lace-making competitions, and it is usually an important feature at the great annual Home Arts and Industries Exhibition at the Albert Hall.

Even before this great movement ladies were beginning to interest themselves in the beautiful but almost vanished craft of the Midland counties. Old lace-makers who remembered

how to make the delicate baby-laces of a former generation were sought out and set to work. Marvellous parchments for the old wide half-stitch patterns, long thrown aside for the coarse Maltese, were discovered and wondered at. Harrowing tales were told of parchments burnt, or boiled down to make glue, and of bobbins used to light the fire. The inquiring ladies, under the spell that lace seldom fails to throw over its devotees, sought out good threads and patterns, and eagerly bought up good work.

A poor old widow, seventy-nine years of age, when visited by one of the ladies who was hunting up lace for "stock," in 1891, was found to have hoarded up in a box 15*s.* worth of lace, and was diligently working to add to her store, hoping some day to be able to sell it. When our visitor bought the boxful as it was the tears of joy came into her eyes. She is now eighty-seven years of age, and is still making lace.

In almost every village something was done. There was want of method, perhaps, and waste of force, but it was an enthusiasm; no one believed at the time that there was any great business possibility in the lace industry. An attempt to bring order into the chaos resulted in the formation of the "Midland Lace Associa-

tion." A letter which appeared in the *Northampton Daily Chronicle* for January 12th, 1897, explains the genesis of this Association:—

"LACE ASSOCIATION FOR THE COUNTIES OF NORTHAMPTON, BUCKINGHAM, AND BEDFORD: A SHORT ACCOUNT OF ITS ORIGIN AND FORMATION.

"On February 3rd, 1891, an exhibition of needlework and pillow lace was held in Northampton, and was opened by H.R.H. the Duchess of Teck. There were 550 exhibits of pillow lace, all made in the above counties. A large amount of prizes was awarded to the poor lace-workers; indeed, so great was the interest exhibited, and so large the quantity of lace sold, that it seemed a pity to let the industry die out (as it was fast doing) for want of encouragement. A preliminary meeting was held in St. Giles's Vicarage, and the scheme of the Lace Association was drawn up. The Countess Spencer kindly consented to act as president, with twelve vice-presidents, and five ladies were appointed to act as a working committee. There was also a general committee of subscribers, whose subscriptions enabled the working committee to buy in a stock of lace, and to meet the expenses of postage, printing, etc.

"The objects of the Association were—

"1. To stimulate and improve the local manufacture of lace.

"2. To provide workers with greater facilities for the sale of their work at more remunerative prices.

"3. To provide instruction in lace-making.

"Wherever it was possible a lady correspondent

was appointed to act as a medium of communication between the lace-workers and the committee.

"At first the lace was sold through the agency of a depôt in Northampton, but at the end of six months the working committee took upon themselves the whole responsibility of the sales, and with so much success that the amount of lace sold has gone on steadily increasing each year, and so great now is the demand for this beautiful fabric that the committee find it difficult to keep pace with the orders that flow in.

"In consequence of the great demand for lace the work of the Association has increased to such an extent that it has been found necessary this year to appoint a special agent to buy and sell for the committee. It is hoped in time (if the demand for lace goes on increasing) that the Association will become self-supporting; but at present, owing to the increased expenses connected with its working, it is still more or less dependent upon subscriptions. I must not omit to add that in 1894 the Lace Association was honoured by an order for 360 yards of pillow lace by H.R.H. the Duchess of York. Before concluding this little sketch it is only right to mention that before the Lace Association was even thought of, ladies in Northamptonshire and the adjoining counties had endeavoured to revive the industry in their own immediate neighbourhoods. Mrs. Chettle, who is now an active member of the Lace Association, began her work in 1888, and before the Association was started had sold £200 worth of lace. Miss M. Roberts, of Spratton, in 1890, started a small subscription fund to enable her to buy the poor people's lace, which she sold for them amongst her friends.

So far back as 1880 Mrs. Harrison, of Paulers Pury, began to take an interest in it. She sold a large quantity of lace to the Ladies' Work Society in Sloane Street, and in 1883 received an order from H.R.H. the Princess Louise and the Duchess of Edinburgh. In 1883 she furnished the Princess Christian, by special request, with notes and statistics of the Bucks lace industry for an article H.R.H. was writing in *Murray's Magazine*, and this article brought the lace-makers into notice, and furnished them with fresh orders. In 1891 Mrs. Harrison joined the Lace Association, and took an active interest in the formation of County Council lace-classes for the various villages of Northamptonshire. . .

"Miss Dryden's able and interesting article in the *Pall Mall Magazine* of March last brought the lace into further notice, and has also been the means of bringing in fresh orders, amongst others one from a Russian nobleman, who sent a donation to the Association, and also asked for patterns and parchments of English-made pillow laces for his mother, who is a 'past master' in the art of Russian pillow lace-making, and who wishes to copy some of our English-made laces. In conclusion I would add that I received an 'award' from Chicago for specimens of pillow lace sent on behalf of the Midland lace-makers.

"GEORGINA M. ROBERTS.

"SPRATTON VICARAGE, NORTHAMPTON."

Mrs. Roberts, the writer of this letter, is herself a most accomplished lace-maker, familiar with the methods of the old Italian laces, of the

Honiton lace, of the heavy linen laces, as well as being a good point-ground worker. The Association beginning as it did, with far too little capital (only £15), was unable by itself to carry on a business which developed so rapidly as did the pillow-lace trade. The ladies of the working committee, therefore, dipped generously into their own pockets, and added largely to the capital without seeking for any return in the form of interest or profit. This generous spending did not appear in the accounts of the Lace Association, that business being kept separate from the further individual efforts of the ladies, though all worked harmoniously together for its good. Through stress of circumstances and from convenience, and partly on account of Mrs. Roberts's nearness to Northampton, the work of the Association proper fell mainly into her hands. She bought and sold lace and thread and parchments, superintending as no ordinary secretary could have done, carrying on for *no* pecuniary reward a business which filled the whole of the working-day with arduous labour. It must be remembered that lace teachers and prickers were almost extinct, that good thread and pins were difficult to obtain, that many of the younger lace-makers had been trained in bad methods. Mrs. Roberts experimented with

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FIG. 13

PILLOW LACE, 19TH CENTURY

NOW MADE AT PAULERS PURY

threads and patterns; there was no lace which she did not understand and could not correct. Wisely comprehending that success could not attend mere lifeless revivals of old work, she collected patterns and laces from all over Europe, and welcomed every kind of work that was good. In 1897 she was obliged to give up the work of selling and buying, and it was placed in the hands of a lady agent in Northampton, who has carried it on with untiring devotion.

Another member of the first working committee was Mrs. Chettle, who is referred to in Mrs. Roberts's letter. This lady found distress among the population about Towcester in 1865, on account of slackness in the shoe trade, and she then helped the people by disposing of £200 worth of lace amongst her friends. Afterwards she allowed her interest in lace-making to drop until the year 1888, when she began to devote herself to the task of buying and selling, and now has a large connection. Mrs. Bostock, who bought and sold in the town of Northampton, also belonged to the first committee.

At Prince's Risborough Mrs. Forrest carried on the same work, and many others laboured, following the example of the originators of the movement. Mrs. Harrison of Paulers Pury was one of the first to carry on lace-buying

on a large scale, though she did not join the Association till 1891.

All these ladies took the place of the old professional lace-buyers, who had almost all given up the trade in the time of its decline. They began, generally in a small way, to buy the lace of old workers out of charity and also from the pure love of it. The rapidity with which these small beginnings became, in the hands of ladies unaccustomed to business and with no wish to make money, large affairs in which the annual expenditure amounted to hundreds of pounds, shows the real vitality of the trade; it shows that at any rate it was not dead because it was not wanted. All who entered into it were carried along, as it were, involuntarily devoting their lives and their money without any previous planning, plunging suddenly into important business transactions just because they happened to be on the spot to do the work and there was no one else to do it. There have been no great losses, neither has there been much profit, for the lace has generally been sold at very little over cost price. It has not been possible, however, to work the Association as distinct from the individual work of the ladies (though it has been only financially distinct) without expenses; it has therefore been to a small extent in debt.

VIII

THE CONDITION AND PROSPECTS OF LACE-MAKING AT THE PRESENT TIME

HAS the industry a future? is it business or is it charity? No question is more often put to the modern lady lace-buyer. There is a great demand, so great that, it must be frankly confessed, it very often cannot be met. Sometimes orders have to be refused, often orders which could be had for the asking are not asked for. Lace-buyers, both the amateur (who has by far the greater part of the business) and the genuine trader working for his own profit, constantly reiterate the cry, "I could sell if I could get the work." It is workers we want, workers by the hundred, workers who will make the *kind of lace we need.* There are some lace-makers who will offer to make you any kind of lace except the one which you happen to want at the moment. Generally you are forced to buy anything they will consent to make on account of the necessity of keeping up your stock, though it may be almost impossible to get a profit on that particular work.

This state of things very naturally suggests the question, Is the work needed, or are we so rich that we can do without such an industry? There is undoubtedly a considerable class of persons to whom it is an immense boon, to whom its disappearance would be an irreparable loss. There are hundreds of women between sixty and ninety years of age quite unfit for any other kind of work who keep themselves by it in independence; any lace-buyer can count up a large number who keep their husbands as well—husbands past work, crippled, or blind, or bedridden. The old mother living in the son's or daughter's house, past being any assistance in the housework, feels the delight of not being a burden on the hard-pressed children. She can still sit at her pillow part of the day and earn the four or five shillings a week which keeps her. Perhaps to the aged the occupation is almost as great a boon as the earnings, and this accounts for the intense pleasure with which the work is almost always spoken of. When sons and daughters are all grown up and gone away, the long days may be unspeakably dull to the old couple, but the wife can always make herself happy turning over the bobbins. We went to see a widow, over eighty years old, living all alone, and tried to buy some of her beautiful lace. "When my husband was alive," she said,

"he didn't care for me working at it, so I put it on one side; but now he's dead, I couldn't do without it, I should be so dull." She could not sell us any of her work, she had orders that would keep her busy for months to come.

But it is not only the aged who are glad of the work; the mother of the family finds it a great help. When the housework is done, and the children are all away at school, she can sit down and work for a couple of hours, and the week's earnings will be a comfortable addition to her man's wages, especially when there is a large family and he a labourer on 12*s.* or 14*s.* a week. There is no other industry so convenient for the home. It is clean work and needs cleanliness, for lace must be spotlessly white if the worker is to get her full price. It creates no litter and no untidiness. The pillow stands by the window, with a cloth thrown over it and the chair ready before it. When baby is put to sleep, the mother has but to lift the cloth and begin her work: there is no getting out of material and implements, and no putting away and clearing up when the children come home to tea. Where shoework or stay-work is taken at home, the littered floor and whirring machine make an unpleasant contrast to the tidiness and quietness of the bobbins with their little subdued rattle so

pleasant to the ear. Lace-making is not tiring, nor in any way trying; given suitable spectacles for the old women, it is not at all trying to the eyes—indeed, an expert worker on a lace she knows well, looks at it no more than a needle-woman looks at a long seam. "I could do it with my eyes shut" is a phrase one often hears of lace-making, but we take that statement for what it is worth. It is not monotonous work, for even in the simplest lace the pattern creates a variety of motion and sufficient occupation for the mind. "My mother always said that to sit down to her pillow was the best rest she could have after her work," we have been told by the daughter of a famous lace-maker.

On the advantages and pleasures of the work much more might justly be said; but there is one drawback, a drawback that in these days seems to have remarkable force: it takes, in comparison with other home industries, a long time to learn. No one loves shoe-work and stay-work, but they can be learnt with astonishingly little expenditure of time and trouble, and herein lies their superiority. An average woman working in her odd hours cannot earn more than 2*s.* or 3*s.* a week until she has been learning lace-making for a year; she may earn as much as that after six months; she will probably earn enough to pay for her pillow

and bobbins and material after six weeks. A really first-class lace-maker needs four or five years of training. She is, of course, earning something all the time, and she is not having lessons continuously, but only when she changes from one pattern to another. During the first few weeks, before the fingers become supple and accustomed to the action, the work may seem slow and tedious, and some perseverance is necessary. Unfortunately perseverance is a rare virtue among our villagers; their faint-heartedness in every matter which does not immediately go well is very remarkable, and would be almost beyond belief.

In the old days children began very young; and a child of five or six, who has an opportunity of learning, will often think lace-making a most delightful occupation—superior to all Kindergarten games. But nowadays it cannot be taught until schooldays are over, when the girls get out of the regular school routine, and are unsettled and disinclined to steady work. Then, after a little loafing about at home, they are off to service, and we wonder where the next generation of lace-makers is to come from. If the babies could be taught to handle the bobbins in schooltime, instead of plaiting paper mats (no easier to do) and other Kindergarten occupations, and if the girls in the upper school could

have an hour or two a week for lace-making instead of working thousands of sums which do not lead to any comprehension of mathematics, and are never likely to be of the smallest use to them, they would, when they leave school, be fairly efficient lace-makers. This need not in anywise prevent their going to service, but in the interval of looking out for a good place they would be useful members of society; they would have a valuable resource in a case of breakdown of health, and after their marriage they would have a pleasant and refining occupation for spare hours. If money is not greatly needed, lace can be made for baby's clothes. The first piece of lace made to trim the little daughter's pinafore has been a great source of pride and pleasure to a married lace pupil. Unless we can train young lace-makers now, the trade must pass away with the present generation. All our present workers (the exceptions are too few to be taken into account) were trained in lace schools; they paid a little for learning, and got their earnings meanwhile. The system was admirably adapted to the nature of the industry it provided; it provided an economical system of excellent technical training without the help of rates or Government grant. To commence such a period of teaching now after the girls leave school is out of the question.

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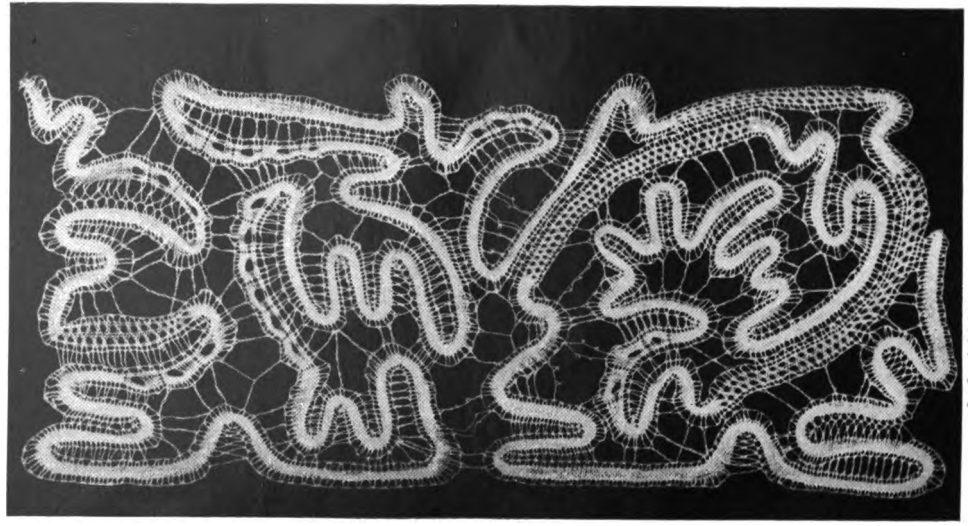

FIG. 14

MODERN PILLOW LACE

MADE AT EAST HADDON AFTER OLD ITALIAN STYLE

Even putting on one side the need of domestic servants, they could not, after thirteen years of age, be kept training for three or four years for a profession, when they should be keeping themselves. The economy of the old system lay in the fact that a girl, beginning quite young, could do very well by the time she was thirteen or fourteen. Something is, however, being done. In some villages a class is held once or twice a week after school hours, to which girls over eleven years old come. The classes generally include some who have already left school, but who are waiting to be old enough to go into good service. Unfortunately it is an expensive matter to keep such classes going for any length of time, as the girls seldom care to pay for their instruction. They expect to learn everything for nothing, because the elementary schools are free; also they do not feel sufficiently sure of being able to continue their work to care to spend money upon it. A lace school of this kind has been started by Mrs. Guthrie at East Haddon, Northamptonshire. She provides a teacher for girls twice a week in a sort of parish room in the village. Here also, on one day in the week, the writer holds a class for adults. In connection with the school is an industry for the production of fine lace-trimmed household linen. It is hoped to be able to

rival the wonderfully dainty linen goods of Austria and Germany; and, indeed, there seems to be no difficulty in doing so, for the only complaint made of our towels by a Bond Street shop was that they were *too* beautiful; ladies would not buy them for the purpose for which they were intended. Yet there was no unsuitability of material; it was merely a matter of dainty needlework and perfectly harmonious design. Ladies do our drawn-thread work, and we make a point of suiting the stitch and linen to the lace. In this matter of harmony and oneness of design the beautiful foreign linen is often a failure. There is no doubt about our being able to do it, but we need more workers. East Haddon is not the only village where these classes are held. On bicycle or horseback Miss Channer goes from one to another, holding more than one class a day in villages three or four miles apart.

County Councils give but a meagre help in this great question of the technical training of the lace-maker. The Northampton County Council gives this year £15 for lace-making. One village may claim £3, which will keep a class going for about six weeks. At the end of that time, if no generous patron is ready to pay for its continuance, the girls probably give up trying, and all the time and money is wasted.

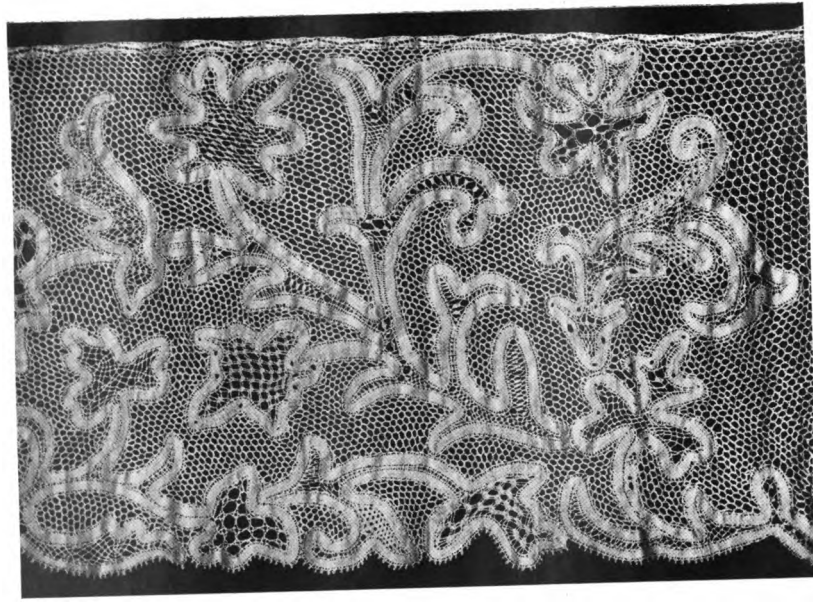

FIG. 15

MODERN PILLOW LACE IN ITALIAN STYLE

MADE AT EAST HADDON BY MISS CHANNER

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At Paulers Pury Mrs. Harrison persuades many mothers to teach their daughters. But Paulers Pury is an exceptional place; it has excellent traditions; its point-ground laces are unrivalled; there is an abundance of good patterns—in fact, patterns which do not take prizes at lace competitions are usually eliminated. Here, as many as one in three of the female population are lace-makers. In other parts of the counties a much smaller proportion of the mothers are lace-makers, and a still smaller proportion are *good* lace-makers. Many mothers cannot, and many will not take the trouble, to teach their daughters.

In Mrs. Guthrie's school linen laces, both of the German and Italian style, are taught as well as the fine point-ground edgings. At one of Miss Channer's classes held at Spratton real Valenciennes is being taught. The people are quick and ready to learn a new lace if only the teaching problem can be dealt with; this problem is successfully solved abroad and is undoubtedly the foundation of foreign lace-making. It is true that we cannot compete with foreigners in the production of cheap torchon laces. Our people will not work for so little money as the Swiss and Germans and Belgians.

After dealing with country lace-makers one wonders how, even in towns, "sweating" can

be possible in England! One longs for some of the poor hard-worked Londoners to help build up our trade. When our villagers refuse to make lace as cheaply as it is imported from abroad, it must be remembered that the foreign work is generally inferior. It is surely a matter for some honest pride that most of our women would be ashamed to ask us to buy lace such as one sees in some London shop windows; they take a pride in their work, and will not often lower its quality for more gain. "Look into it and you'll see it's good work," says a woman standing out for what she considers a fair price. "I would not show it you at all if you could not say it is well made." Yet that woman was dependent on lace to keep her and her blind husband from abject poverty; her pride would not have allowed her to take a penny off the price, nor to offer anything but the best work. The public does not always distinguish between good and bad quality; it asks for something cheap. It sees in a shop window "Real Torchon, 2*d.*," and it says, "How wonderfully cheap! I'll have a dozen yards." The Northamptonshire woman would have remarked, "I would not be a foreigner to make such stuff," and she would have been taunted with the reproach, "You can't do it so cheap." No, we cannot, and we do not succeed when we try to

be cheap. There is a certain knack in turning out poor work of a perfectly uniform quality. The writer has deliberately tried to imitate poor Brussels lace, but she can only make it hopelessly and unevenly bad, or uniformly good and expensive. English people must triumph by the superiority of their work if they are to triumph at all, and if it is good they must be well paid for it. It is in the best and most expensive laces that we must try to make our way, leaving twopenny torchon to the foreigner. It is unfortunate that our British public has an hereditary preference for expensive foreign lace over British. Many a lady will take pleasure in spending £10 on lace in Venice when she will hesitate to spend 10*s.* on equally good lace in Northampton! It is uninteresting and unromantic to buy lace in Northampton, even if it is exactly like the Venetian and no more expensive.

Having dealt at some length with the condition of the industry as regards the worker, we must, before passing on to other aspects, show what are the earnings of a lace-maker. There are a few women who get £1 per week or more; many more could earn as much if they could be properly taught. The average among those who devote a considerable amount of time to it is perhaps 10*s.* per week. Some will only earn 5*s.*, and some very old women not

more than 2*s.* or 3*s.* There are hardly any women who really give up all their time to it; very few who sit at it regularly many hours a day. To earn one's shilling a day *after* the housework and cooking is done is considered a very creditable performance. These earnings ought not to be compared with those of girls working regularly in factories; for there cannot be the steady uninterrupted work at home, where four or five hours is a good measure, in addition to other duties and interruptions. How does the industry stand from the trader's point of view? This is a much-debated question.

At the time when the trade was at its lowest ebb, ten or twelve years ago, almost all the professional lace-buyers had abandoned it. Mr. Smith, at Olney, tells us that he continued merely from love of the work without hope of profit. The profits are still extremely small, but he, like everyone else, complains of having too small a staff of workers. Mr. W. Robinson, of Bedford, turned his attention to millinery laces of horsehair and fibre; they are worked on old yak and torchon parchments, but some of them resemble straw plaiting more than lace. The field then was absolutely free for the amateur; there was practically no competition with the lace-buyers. The situation was a unique one; ladies who were amateurs in the

art of buying and selling found themselves masters of a rising industry, which in its former flourishing days had always been carried on from the strictly commercial point of view; nor can there have been many other trades in England so entirely in the hands of women.

It would have been surprising indeed if no mistakes had been made; it is surprising that so few were made. Time has proved that it was a mistake to begin the Lace Association with so small a capital; taking the individual lace businesses of the various ladies, those who have put the most money into it have the most flourishing industry and have suffered the least loss.

At present an attempt is being made to start the Midland Lace Association on a new basis with a solid capital, on which interest can be paid if the present conditions continue. An offshoot of this association, the North Bucks Lace Association, which remains affiliated to the parent society, has begun in a business-like way, having the advantage that always comes of beginning later and profiting by the mistakes of one's predecessors. It is excellently organised and does good work.

Another mistake was that of keeping prices too low. The women for a few years had had great difficulty in selling their lace and expected to get very little for it; they therefore

accepted absurdly little remuneration for their work. The new buyers, not wishing to make any profit, sold it again for very little. This was a drawback in many ways. First of all it kept young people from wishing to learn lace-making; so little could be earned, that only old lace-makers who could do very little else, cared to take it up, and buyers were dependent upon a generation which was passing away. In the second place, no one who desired to make a profit could begin trading in lace, as they would inevitably be undersold by the ladies. The consequence, if this had continued, would have been that a very large body of workers would have been dependent upon the existence of a sufficiently large body of ladies willing to work very hard at this trade for nothing, a state of things which could not be guaranteed to last.

Another way in which low prices have been a hindrance, has been the difficulty of supplying shops, who would have been good customers. The shop could not put on its fair profit and sell the lace, when it could be had for so very much less by writing to a Northamptonshire lady, or at one of the lace sales and exhibitions. The Association, which could not sell as economically as ladies could sell among their own friends, was to a certain extent undersold. It could not make even a large enough profit to pay the expenses of

keeping up an Association shop, which would undoubtedly have been an advantage to the industry. Fortunately this condition of things is now righting itself. Prices are gradually rising, though some good laces are still being sold for too little, which may soon have the effect of making them disappear from the market. Ladies in connection with the Association have agreed to add a definite percentage to the cost price of their lace. The need of a larger staff of workers has to some extent forced up the scale of remuneration to the lace-maker, though if this had happened sooner we should to-day be in a better position and able to put a larger stock into the market. With better prices, lace shops are buying, to a much larger extent than formerly, from Midland villages; but the bulk of the trade is still in the hands of the Association and those connected with it. With good management this may easily remain so, for we are more popular with the lace-makers than is the commercial traveller, and we get all the best work. When they are well served, the shops are very willing to trade, with us, and we can often send them a better selection than their own travellers can obtain. Personal experience would suggest that shop managers are the *most* satisfactory persons to deal with, for they are invariably courteous and

business-like, and withal pay promptly, which cannot always be said of our lady customers. We should not be always in such need of capital if we could avoid bad debts; the necessity of paying workers immediately makes it very trying to be obliged to wait months and months for the price of lace sold, and means much drawing upon the lace banking account.

A good idea of the stock which we can show could have been gathered at the lace exhibition and sale held by kind permission of the Earl and Countess Spencer at Spencer House on July 12th of last year. The value of the lace in the room was calculated at about £800. Probably not much of what was unsold that day remained many weeks on hand. It represents pretty accurately what the Association can produce at short notice, but it does not give a correct idea of the whole output of the three counties. It did not include the work of the North Bucks Association, which held a separate and very successful sale, nor does it show the great quantity of lace made to order on which workers are continually engaged. These periodical sales are at present necessary to bring the customers into touch with the work, but it would be to the convenience of the customer and to the advantage of the trade if this stock could be shown at a permanent shop or depôt.

The existence of an industry is not entirely a question of supply and demand; opportunity and organisation are important factors. In our three lace counties we have a body of expert lace-makers capable of holding their own against any foreign manufacturers, if they are given a chance, if the trade can be organised on lines favourable to its development. We have tried to show that its life or death is very largely a question of technical education, yet all that has been done for the training of the lace-maker is owing to private generosity. The County Councils help with the merest pittance, and neutralise the little good they do by imposing oppressive regulations.

A teacher now working under the Northampton County Council is told that she cannot be paid for her work until four other villages have finished their courses of lessons. She does not know whether these villages have even begun. Besides being asked to wait for her remuneration for an indefinite period, she has to *advance money herself* for pillows, bobbins, and threads, for the same reason that no money can be paid to her until the other four villages of which she knows nothing have finished their work. Not many teachers would consent to such conditions. Such a system may answer for technical classes, like those held for teaching wood-carving, which

are merely for improving amusement, but for a serious trade it is an absurdity. The supineness of the authorities of the counties concerned is extraordinary. Lace-making cannot be learnt at the Technical School in Northampton, nor is design taught with any view to its being utilised for lace-making. In spite of the number of curious relics of the past in the shape of lace-pillows, pins, winders, candle-blocks, flasks, bobbins, dicky-pots, maids, etc., which abound in the county, the Northampton museum only shows one dirty, neglected pillow and horse. There is no collection of old parchments, no collection of lace (though a collection of Northampton lace would be of supreme interest), and no collection of lace designs and draughts for the county.

Literature on the subject of lace-making is unattainable at the Northampton Public Library; we have tried in vain to hear in Northampton of one single book on the subject of lace. We have depended upon the kindness of friends having valuable books in their possession, and of Mr. Alan Cole, of the South Kensington Museum, in allowing us to make use of his splendid lecture on the art of lace-making. South Kensington is generous in allowing us to make use of photographs, and in the museum every facility is given for the study

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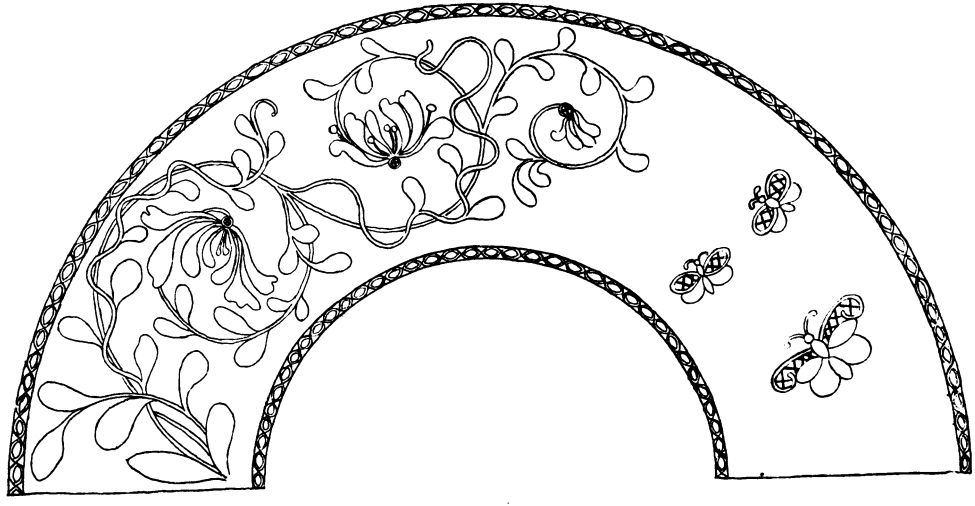

FIG. 16

DESIGN FOR LACE FAN BY MISS ROBERTS

of the splendid collection of lace, but in the counties themselves no help can be obtained by the novice in lace. We have been starved and snubbed and neglected, and then we are told the industry is not wanted because it has not been a great success! If only one little room could be found in Northampton for a good lace museum; if only a few standard books could be provided; if design, and the pricking and preparing of lace parchments could be taught in the technical school, what an improvement there would be!

The writers of this little book have turned their attention to the preparation of parchments. Miss M. Roberts, after studying the "principles of design" under Mr. Knight at the Technical School, Northampton, has tried by herself to apply her knowledge and skill to lace design, and with considerable success. She is now prepared to produce suitable patterns for all kinds of lace for any kind of purpose. Miss Channer has experimented in the pricking of parchments with a view to discovering the best method to teach others, in order that pricking may not continue to be, as it now is in England, a lost art. The so-called "prickers" who remain depend entirely upon old parchments for the pricking of a point ground; they are incapable of ruling out any pattern for them-

selves. The old methods can be studied in the remarkable draughts in the possession of Mr. Smith, lace-buyer, of Olney.

Surely the existence in our midst of such a beautiful art and handicraft as that of lace-making is worth an effort, worth some public attention, some public expenditure. It is natural to our people; it is absolutely at home in our three counties; it is beloved by thousands of our villagers, mixed with all the romance of their lives, a blessing to the old and the delight of the young. One notes the little girls' delight to use an old bobbin with "grandfather's name on it" as one teaches in a class of to-day, and one's mind wanders back in imagination to the days when grandmother was young and had husband's and children's names on her pillow, when the little ones were sent off day by day to the lace school, when the young man gave his sweetheart pretty beaded bone bobbins to make her pillow smart, and the old man stayed at home to make lace, and it seems as if all the romance and interest of life centred round that curious old bundle of straw, "my pillow." We must take it to heart that the words are not a mere relic of the past, but a living factor in thousands of homes to-day.

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